

Ochoa Mine Project Final Environmental Impact Statement

Carlsbad Field Office, New Mexico

February 2014

BLM/NM/PL-14-02-3500



BLM Mission Statement

The Bureau of Land Management is responsible for stewardship of our public lands. The BLM is committed to manage, protect and improve these lands in a manner to serve the needs of the American people. Management is based upon the principles of multiple use and sustained yield of our nation's resources within a framework of environmental responsibility and scientific technology. These resources include recreation, rangelands, timber, minerals, watershed, fish and wildlife habitat, wilderness, air and scenic quality, as well as scientific and cultural values.



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Pecos District
Carlsbad Field Office
620 E. Greene

Carlsbad, New Mexico 88220-6292

www.blm.gov/nm

In Reply Refer To:

Dear Reader:

Attached is the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Ochoa Mine Project. The U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) prepared the Final EIS to address the effects of allowing Intercontinental Potash Corporation USA (ICP) to develop and operate mining and processing operations partly on BLM-managed public land and minerals and partly on state and private lands. The proposed new mine in southern Lea County, New Mexico, approximately 40 miles southeast of Carlsbad, would extract polyhalite ore for the production of the sulfate of potash and sulfate of potash magnesia. As proposed by ICP, the project involves two separate operations: mining polyhalite ore from an underground formation and processing the raw polyhalite to produce marketable products. The final products would be transported by truck to a loadout facility near Jal, New Mexico, to be loaded on trains and shipped to markets. The proposed project would operate for 50 years.

The Draft EIS was published on August 9, 2013. In the Final EIS, the BLM designated a Preferred Alternative consisting of a mix of what BLM considers the best features of Alternatives A, B, and C, as well as some new aspects incorporated in response to public comments and BLM concerns. Compared to the Proposed Action the Preferred Alternative includes a smaller tailings stockpile, additional monitoring of water resources, subsidence and dust and reclamation requirements and a more formalized co-development coordination with stakeholders, and a dispute resolution process. Other differences incorporated into the Final EIS include some minor changes to the size and layout of the proposed evaporation ponds and tailings stockpile, updated information on ICP's current permits and mining leases, updated information on existing and potential future oil and gas development in the project area, and additional or modified mitigation measures. The BLM has not made any decision yet. The record of decision (ROD) will document BLM's decision on the proposed project.

The Final EIS and associated subsidence and water resources monitoring and mitigation plans will be published on the website listed below when the Notice of Availability is published. Inquiries or requests for the digital or hardcopy Final EIS can be sent to the Ochoa Mine EIS Project Manager at 620 E Greene St., Carlsbad, NM, 88220, by email at the addresses listed below, or by telephone at the numbers below between 7:45 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday excluding Federal holidays. Facsimile requests may be sent to 575-234-9264. The subject line of emails and facsimiles should be identified as "Ochoa Mine Project FEIS"

For further information on this Final EIS, please contact David Herrell, Project Manager, or Shiva Achet, Planning and Environmental Coordinator at the Carlsbad Field Office. Phone: 575-234-2229 or 575-234-5924

Email: dherrell@blm.gov or sachet@blm.gov

Project Website: <http://www.nm.blm.gov/cfo/ochoaMine/>

Thank you for your interest in public land management.

Sincerely,

George MacDonell

Field Manager

**Final
Environmental Impact Statement
Ochoa Mine Project**

BLM/NM/PL-14-02-3500

Lead Agency:	U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management Carlsbad Field Office
Cooperating Agencies:	City of Eunice, New Mexico City of Jal, New Mexico New Mexico Environment Department U.S. Department of Energy, Carlsbad Field Office
Project Location:	Lea County, New Mexico
Correspondence on this EIS Should be Directed to:	Ochoa Mine Project EIS Project Lead BLM Carlsbad Field Office 620 East Greene Street Carlsbad, NM 88220

ABSTRACT

Intercontinental Potash Corporation (USA) (ICP) is proposing to develop a new mine in southern Lea County, New Mexico, to extract polyhalite ore approximately 1,500 feet underground for the production of the sulfate of potash and sulfate of potash magnesia. Once mined, the polyhalite would be transported to the surface and processed to produce saleable products. The final products would be moved by truck to a facility near Jal, New Mexico, to be loaded on trains and shipped to markets.

The Proposed Action would require approximately 2,400 acres of new surface disturbance, construction and operation of office and processing facilities, development of up to 8 brackish water wells, an 11-mile new water pipeline, construction and operation of a railroad loadout facility near Jal, New Mexico, and the pumping of a maximum of 4,000 gallons per minute of groundwater from the Capitan Reef Aquifer. The proposed project would operate for 50 years. Voluntary coordination with fluid mineral companies and service providers would be implemented to minimize potential conflicts.

The BLM's Preferred Alternative incorporates the mining and processing methods, water demands, and surface disturbance described for the Proposed Action. The tailings stockpile may have a smaller footprint under the Preferred Alternative. The primary difference compared to the Proposed Action is increased monitoring and mitigation, improved tailings reclamation, and more BLM involvement in the management of co-development.

This Final Environmental Impact Statement analyzes the environmental effects of the Proposed Action, the Preferred Alternative, three other action alternatives, and the No Action Alternative.

Responsible Official for the EIS:	George MacDonell Field Manager Carlsbad Field Office
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